

# STATE OF ALASKA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

2021

Source  
CSHR 8(CRA)

House  
Resolve No.  
8



Creating the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity.

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## BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

**WHEREAS**, according to the United States Bureau of the Census, in 2019, 10.1 percent of Alaskans, or 80,012 people, lived in poverty; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, 35,673 Alaskans lived in deep poverty, which is defined as a total household income below 50 percent of the poverty threshold; and

**WHEREAS** communities of color in the state are disproportionately affected by poverty; in 2019, 14.2 percent of African Americans, 10.8 percent of Latinx Americans, and 24 percent of American Indians or Alaska Natives lived in poverty, while the poverty rate among non-Hispanic whites was seven percent; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska Natives experience the highest rates of poverty in the state, averaging approximately 31.8 percent statewide over the past 15 years; and

**WHEREAS**, in 2019, 26,771 children, 14.8 percent of children in the state, lived in poverty; and

**WHEREAS** Alaska ranks 37th in the country in percentage of people in poverty; and

**WHEREAS** living in poverty is associated with lower life expectancy; high infant

mortality; poor reproductive health; higher rates of infectious diseases, including tuberculosis and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV); higher rates of substance use, including tobacco, alcohol, and illegal substances; higher rates of noncommunicable diseases; higher rates of depression and suicide; and increased exposure to environmental risks; and

**WHEREAS** poverty is not purely economic but brings with it dependency, oppression, social exclusion, and exploitation; and

**WHEREAS** other states have recognized the effects of structural racism, inequality, and historical trauma as root causes of poverty; and

**WHEREAS** poverty reduces opportunities, limits choices, undermines hope, and threatens the health and well-being of low-income Alaskans; and

**WHEREAS** many Alaskans who are living with a low income are kept out of poverty by vital social safety net programs, the Alaska permanent fund dividend, Alaska Native corporation dividends, and subsistence fishing, hunting, and gathering of natural foods; and

**WHEREAS** many families in the state with income above the federal poverty level still struggle to meet basic needs, such as housing, food, transportation, child care, and health care; and

**WHEREAS** asset-limited, income-constrained, employed ("ALICE") individuals and families are underrepresented in current data and discussions of poverty in the state; and

**WHEREAS** the "Healthy Alaskans 2020" state health improvement plan recognized the need to address poverty in the state and determined that the state's health care and education goals, among others, will not be met if the state does not make significant progress in reducing the number of Alaskans living in poverty; and

**WHEREAS** the "Healthy Alaskans 2030" state health improvement plan continues to prioritize addressing health indicators related to poverty, including chronic disease, health care, nutrition, and education; and

**WHEREAS** anti-poverty funding is currently designated for welfare programs that support low-income Alaskans, including vital safety net programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Medicaid, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP), and housing and child care assistance, all programs that are critical to the health and well-being of Alaskans living in poverty; and

**WHEREAS** opportunities exist to enhance current welfare programs so that available resources will most effectively address the factors that keep Alaskans in poverty; and

**WHEREAS** the science surrounding the root causes of poverty has advanced in the past 55 years, resulting in a need to generate new conversations about the reasons poverty persists; and

**WHEREAS**, because poverty is complex and multidimensional, a multi-pronged, systemic evaluation of each root cause and type of poverty, and interactions within this dynamic system, needs to be conducted;

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives recognizes the immediate need for community dialogue and organization to bring innovative approaches to reducing the state's poverty rates and breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty and prioritizing physical and behavioral health, food security, social justice, education, economic development, housing, the environment, and culture; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the House of Representatives hereby creates the House Task Force on Poverty and Opportunity; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the duties of the task force include

(1) examining how current statutes and regulations affect poverty and the intergenerational cycle of poverty;

(2) seeking input on best practices for poverty reduction from service providers, community-based organizations, legislators, state agencies, stakeholders, the business community, subject matter experts, and individuals with lived experience;

(3) recommending to the legislature means through which the legislature may foster dialogue, within the legislature and between the legislature and the public, regarding poverty and the intergenerational cycle of poverty;

(4) helping to create opportunities for public dialogue regarding issues surrounding poverty, including healthy and adequate housing, nutritious and affordable food, clean drinking water, proper sanitation, education, health care, and social services;

(5) preparing and making available to the public and the legislature informational materials for use in public dialogue about poverty and the intergenerational cycle of poverty and providing for translation of these materials into the languages spoken across the state; and

(6) submitting draft legislation and other material and recommending policy actions to the governor and the legislature to effectively reduce intergenerational poverty and promote and encourage economic self-sufficiency; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that the task force consists of 23 members appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives as follows:

(1) four members of the public with lived experience, such as receiving welfare benefits;

(2) four members from nonprofit organizations conducting poverty alleviation work or social services;

(3) two members who are researchers in the field of economics or public health;

(4) three members from tribal governments or tribal nonprofits;

(5) one member from a corporation formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act;

(6) two members from the house of representatives;

(7) one member from a faith community;

(8) one member from an organization that advocates for immigrants or refugees;

(9) two members, not representing the same municipality, who work in municipal government for a municipality with fewer than 15,000 residents;

(10) two members, not representing the same municipality, who work in municipal government for a municipality with more than 15,000 residents; and

(11) one member representing senior citizens and elders; and be it

**FURTHER RESOLVED** that

(1) a majority of the members of the task force constitutes a quorum;

(2) the task force may meet as often as necessary on a schedule determined by the members of the task force;

(3) the task force may meet during and between legislative sessions;

(4) members of the task force serve without compensation and are not entitled to per diem or reimbursement of travel expenses;

(5) the task force may conduct meetings in person or virtually;

(6) the task force terminates December 31, 2022; and

(7) not later than December 31, 2022, the task force shall deliver to the speaker of the house of representatives, the president of the senate, the chief clerk of the house of representatives, and the senate secretary a final report with legislative recommendations and notify the legislature that the report is available.